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NEWS RELEASE

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Hope High School Complex Making Satisfactory Progress toward Reconstitution

PROVIDENCE – In his first report to Education Commissioner Peter McWalters regarding the Commissioner’s Corrective Action Order, Special Master Nicholas C. Donohue has determined that the Hope High School complex is making satisfactory progress toward a successful school opening next month.

“Sufficient and good progress is being made and thus a good beginning has occurred,” Donohue wrote in his report to the Commissioner. “However, there should be no mistaking that this is only the beginning. There is a long road ahead....Overall, indications are that progress will continue, and expectations should remain high for Hope.”

Commissioner McWalters, who received the report from Donohue today (July 29th, 2005), said: “I am pleased to see that through their hard work last spring and this summer the administrators of the Providence Schools, the leadership of the three schools at the Hope complex, and the faculty have been working together to ensure a smooth transition and a successful year for the students. I look forward to our continued work on the many initiatives under way at Hope.”

Last February, following a series of public hearings, McWalters issued an Order of Reconstitution and Corrective Action, in which he mandated that Hope High School be reorganized into three small, autonomous learning communities. The order mandated that the school institute student advisories and that it establish strong and meaningful parent and community partnerships. McWalters appointed Donohue as a Special Master to monitor implementation of the Order.

In his report to McWalters, Donohue focused on four aspects of the Order, noting progress to date and work that lies ahead:

- Establishment of small learning communities: Hope has established a flexible schedule and an advisory structure for incoming 9th graders, but must do further work toward development of learning standards and establishing an autonomous identity for each community.
- Personalization of learning: Efforts have been made to implement Comprehensive School Counseling, but more work must be done on advisories and Individual Learning Plans.

- Professionalizing the workplace for staff (i.e., reviewing and improving instruction): The new administration team has shown positive, respectful leadership, but more work needs to be done regarding teacher evaluations, professional development, and recruiting a full complement of highly qualified staff.
- Involvement of parents, students, and community-members as full partners: Parents have been brought in as representatives on the Transitional School Improvement Team, but more work needs to be done on parental involvement, community partnerships, and relations with middle schools and higher education, alumni, and youth leadership.

Overall, Donohue found no areas of “critical concern” at this time regarding implementation of the Commissioner’s Order.

He praised the Providence Public School Department staff for supporting the implementation of the Order, but he noted that the department “must assure the appropriation of adequate staff and fiscal resources to achieve the elements of the Order.” In a future progress report, Donohue will develop criteria and measure compliance regarding “district leadership and support.”

The report will be posted this morning on the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website, www.ride.ri.gov